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ABSTRACT

Micronesians are in the throes of cultural and structural assimilation and it appears that integrating Micronesia into American social, political and economic structures is United States policy. Several cultures have been transmitted in Micronesia, one native, others superimposed from the West and from Japan; and there are three stages in terms of the historical perspective: (1) colonization; (2) migrant superordination; and (3) cultural and structural assimilation into American ideology and culture. First to arrive in Micronesia were the Spanish, followed by the Germans, with Japan receiving a mandate after World War I from the League of Nations. Japan used Micronesia as an extension of Japan and was influential in moving the Micronesians toward a Western style of life with a monied economy, a work ethic, and the people at the bottom of the hierarchy, providing only three years of schooling. American interest since the end of World War II has been strategic, not economic, to keep Micronesia out of the hands of another world power. Currently, the United States handles foreign policy and funds political, social and economic institutions; the Micronesians manage domestic policy and the move is towards greater assimilation. (NL)

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Whose footprints are in the sand now? Micronesian assimilation and acculturation to Western institutions.

ABSTRACT

This paper follows the processes of acculturation and assimilation of Micronesia into Western institutions. It traces the educational, economic, and political development of Micronesia from contact with the West to the present day.

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Whose Footprints Are In The Sand Now?

Micronesian Assimilation and Acculturation

to American Institutions

The process and impact that Westernization has had on Micronesia is in many ways still an open question. In some ways, Micronesia still has a lot more leverage to avoid complete assimilation because of its remoteness from the main centers of Western thought which would be Europe, Australia, and the Americas. In other ways, because of the steady influence of Western penetration into their societies, especially as concerns the United States, that movement has steadily created a change in their cultural heritage away from their traditional cultures toward the West.

The transmission of cultural heritage has been looked at from various viewpoints within the academic world. In Western culture the school, for example, is often seen as one of the main formal institutions which transmits that heritage. In philosophy we have the perenialist and the essentialist view expressed by such

men as Robert Hutchins and I. B. Berkson. Berkson (1958) states, for example, that

> the school should teach the values of Western culture which are more reliable than the judgements of a student. The school should train the character in two ways: by teaching the child contemporary mores, thereby producing social stability and by teaching him the enduring ideals of the culture, thereby enabling him to criticize and improve these mores when he is an adult. (p. 244)

Anthropology takes the point of view of "to each his own" in the sense of enculturation which according to Herskovits (1948) is "The process of conscious and unconscious formal and informal cultural conditioning exercised within the boundaries sanctioned by a given body of custom" (pp. 39, 51).

The sociologists call the process socialization and identify it strongly with the schools although they also see it in the larger perspective of general society too. Very often they will say at least as regards American schools that they have served two separate but interdependent functions.

> One has to provide continuity between generations by preparing children to carry out the social roles that are traditionally performed by adults. The other has been to furnish for at least some children the opportunity to participate in the larger society in rewarding ways. (Swartz, 1975, p. xiii)

What does this have to do with Micronesia? Whether societies use formal institutions, non-formal institutions, or informal insitutions makes no difference, they all seek to transmit their cultural heritage in one form or another. With respect to Micronesia, this means that several cultures have, through the years, been transmitted, one distinctly Microneisan, the others superimposed from the outside have been Western with the possible exception of Japan. Perhaps, therefore, a closer look is justified to see the direction this movement is taking and the processes which have brought this about.

There are various theories which deal with the concept of acculturation or assimilation; two or three of which are, perhaps, applicable to Micronesia. In terms of a historical perspective they can be broken down into colonization, migrant superordination, and cultural and structural assimilation into America's ideology and cultural heritage.

The concept of colonization as defined by Yetman and Stelle (1975) is "the outright conquest of indigenous people. who are then dominated and controlled by the imposition of alien institutions through legally established bureaucracies" (p. 228).

To this process Blauner (1969) then goes on to outline the process of colonialism except that he reverses the first step. Instead of an outside oppressor who comes in and occupies or colonizes the indigenous population, he says there has existed situations where the indigenous people were forced into the larger society of the colonizer. This he calls internal colonialism. He then goes on to outline the rest of the process which is similar if not identical to classic colonialism.

> The second condition is subjection to various forms of unfree labor that greatly restricts the physical and social mobility of the group and its participation in the political arena. The third is a cultural policy of the colonizer that constrains, transforms, and destroys original values, orientations and ways of life.
>
> Fourth, the colonized group is administered, managed, and manipulated by the dominant power. (p. 229)

This fourth condition is usually for the economic gain of the colonizer.

Much of Micronesia's early history with respect to contact with Western man can be seen in the context of colonization. The Spanish came first when Magellan set sail on March 6, 1521. "This event marked the beginning of the conquest of Micronesia" (Heine, 1974, p. 11).

The Spanish, however, were mainly interested in Guam

and in the Marianas islands as a means of provisioning their ships as they sailed to other ports all throughout the Pacific. This combined with a certain zeal for Christianity determined much of their original policies.

As far as Guam and the Marianas were concerned, this meant a complete decimation of the population as Spain increased her control throughout the islands. For example, "the Chamorro, a once proud people numbering approximately 70,000 to 100,000 were reduced to a population of 6,000 or 9,000, while Catholicism became the dominant religion at the point of a sword" (Heine, p. 12).

The Spanish however, did try to send some missionaries to the Western Carolines, "Sonsoral in 1710 and Ulithi in 1731" (Heine, p. 12). But each attempt was met with bloodshed as in each case the missionaries were killed. As a result little of Spain's influence remains today except for the Marianas and the Phillipines.

Next came the Germans, their interest was commercial and they introduced Protestianism as a result of their stay. "In the late nineteenth century they established themselves in the Marshals through that favored colonial device, the trading firm which they called the Jaluit

Company (for the island on which it was headquartered) (Niven, 1977, p. 61). Consequently, they introduced coconut plantations and commercial agriculture.

But their stay was brief and much of their administration was indirect as they left much of the mediation of disputes to the Chiefs, while all economic activity was handled by the Jaluit Company. Thus,

> The German administration succeeded in imposing its control throughout the islands of Micronesia without unduly antagonizing the natives.... and to a certain degree, they protected the natives from unscrupulous traders, and in general they attempted to ease the movement of the natives into the Western world. (Heine, p. 13)

Japan began the changes that really shook the islands to their core. As a result of World War I, she received Micronesia in the form of a mandate from the League of Nations

> There was a xenophobic quality to Japan's administration, and outsiders were barred.... The Japanese treated the islands as an extension of Japan that was to be developed commercially.... In the district centers, especially in Palau and the Marianas, where the Japanese presence was heaviest, the people began the profound shift from a subsistence to a money economy. (Niven, p. 62)

This change was extremely pervasive and really cannot be underestimated in Micronesia's movement toward a more Western style of life even if it came from an Eastern power. For a monied economy meant wages, and wages meant

the work ethic which was imposed on the Micronesian especially on Saipan and in Palau. True, however, to their colonial trappings,

> the Japanese welcomed Micronesians into their system, but kept them firmly on the bottom. The system was for the benefit of Japan, and the function of Micronesians was to provide its basic labor. (Niven, p. 64)

The Japanese also introduced the concept of schooling to the Micronesian even if it was rudimentary and directed toward their cultural and colonial economy.

> The Japanese established strong schools for their own children and rudimentary schools, generally of three grades, for Micronesian children. They taught children to speak Japanese, to read it at a simple level, and to calculate.... However, the schools did little to expand the world view of Micronesians; rather they aimed for a student subservient to Japanese interests, who was not likely to rise beyond semi-skilled labor and certainly was not likely to reach a personal independence in life. (Niven, p. 65)

The second World War ended Japanese domination, and in a sense ended the period of classical colonialism. After this, American involvement became the keynote of development and movement toward Westernization. For while the Americans were interested in developing the Micronesians politically and socially, they were not interested in strong economic development in the way the

the Japanese had been. As a result, America's interests can be characterized today as strategic. They were not interested in allowing another world power to drop anchor in Micronesian waters.

> In the late 1960's and the early 1970's a number of Micronesian studies by military officers were published at war colleges in the United States ... without exception, these studies have indicated that the major immediate strategic justification for retaining Micronesia is to deny the use of the trust territory to another power. (McHenry, 1975, p. 67)

In some senses then America's position can best be seen as superordinate migration. Stanley Lieberson (1961) says that,

> When the population migrating to a new contact situation is superior in technology (particularly weapons) and more tightly organized than the indigenous group, the necessary conditions for maintaining the migrants' political and economic institutions are usually imposed on the indigenous population. (p. 47)

Consequently, if there is criticism of one aspect of American involvement with respect to Micronesia, it has been concerned with the imposition of American social and political institutions and ideology along with the concomitant development of a monied economic framework. This has in turn led to further strains on, and erosion of traditional Micronesian values.

> The impact of Western civilization, especially twentieth century Americanism has been great to the extent that it dislocated the fundamental bonds of the traditional societies and set in motion many processes of change.... It is the shock and continuing after effects of contact with more advanced societies that ... breaks up traditional social structures of ... underdeveloped countries, and Micronesia is an underdeveloped country. (Heine, p. 30)

Perhaps in a larger sense, this can be seen as a world wide phenomena which is a shift toward modernization and urbanization. In Micronesia's case it is undergoing this change through the vehicle of Westernization, but they are not alone. Nesbit (1970) notes in the Social Bond that

> one of the most striking features of the political change that is found today in such parts of the world as Africa, Asia, and large parts of Oceania is the shift taking place from ancient allegiances and authorities of personal groups (such as kinships, caste, and religion) to those allegiances and authorities which are bound up with the territorial political state and its numerous subdivisions. (p. 105)

Tonnies more properly defined this process as the movement from "Gemeinshaft" to "Gesellshaft." He defined Gemeinshaft "as the kind of traditional community that existed before the French and Industrial Revolutions--one in which persons were bound together by shared values and sacred traditions. Social solidarity

stemmed from members' common identity and kinship." Gesellshaft, on the other hand, was defined as "associations... typically contrasted in commodity exchange and sealed by promise and conventions that are as likely breached as they are fulfilled" (Karp, Stone, and Yoels, 1977, pp.11-13).

How did this process or movement from Gemeinshaft to Gesellshaft take place under American occupation? Many would say that it was mainly through the political and governmental process of democratization in tandem with the institution of the American schooling process. These processes were first instituted by the Navy (Nufer, 1978; Richard, 1957). Hughes and Lingenfelter (1974) state that

> The first step in the democratization of Micronesia was the formation of 118 municipalities throughout the territory in 1948.... While on the district level, advisory groups of Micronesian leaders were established to assist the district administrators. These gradually evolved into district legislatures which are elected bodies with law making authority over each of the six districts in Micronesia. (p.21)

With respect to schooling, schools also were established almost immediately by the Navy as part of the general reconstruction of island life after the devastations of war. Elisabeth Attila (1965) once stated that this process was started almost before the smoke of battle had cleared.

> The Navy began reconstruction of island life in all phases after the devastation of the war.... Since Americans believe in a free public educational system open to all on a co-educational basis, schools were set up while battles were raging not too far away. (p.492)

Of course, much of what the American schooling system was designed to do came in conflict with the Micronesian way of life immediately. And in a real sense, America was placed on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand there was an understanding that Micronesia would have to have its own system which would be cognizant of Micronesian values; on the other hand Americans knew and understood their own system best. Thus it was almost a "no win" situation and doomed from the start. According to Hall (1959):

> The two alternatives were to attempt an imposition of a complete American school system upon Micronesia, or to educate and stimulate Micronesians to build up their own school system. Neither could be done absolutely. Thus, the American administration under the Department of Interior determined on a policy of an American educational structure supported and operated by Micronesians for a Universal, six year elementary program. (p.55)

Much of this dilemma has continued until the present and can be traced to Micronesia's collective way of dealing with achievement and to their concept of knowledge. In Micronesia, knowledge is private, not public property and the acquiring of what passed as traditional education was a privilege usually passed from one person to

another rather than the right of all people as in the American school. Usually the risk is to avoid failure, embarrassment or both. "Yet the western imported models and many of the attending U.S. teachers and administrators who deliver them, continue to assume a western cultural context in Micronesia" (Ballendorf, 1979, p.24).

Thus, these problems have permeated and changed the Micronesian schooling system and have caused conflict and change almost continually throughout the three basic periods of its existance: The Navy period, 1944 to 1951; the Interior Department period, 1951 to 1963 (or the Gibson years); and the Interior Department II period, 1963 to the present (Ballendorf, 1979).

The next step in political development occurred in 1965 and this was the development of the Congress of Micronesia. The Congress of Micronesia was formed "with elected representatives from all six districts and with legislative authoriey over each of the six districts in in Micronesia" (Hughes and Lingenfelter, p.21). And perhaps it should be mentioned here that the U.S. House of Representatives and the Congress of Micronesia were very parallel concepts. This new Congress of Micronesia provided the impetus through funding for Micronesia's new plural society or nation state. This became the

main political institution which began to move Micronesians toward new formal institutions and Gesellshaft relations.

These formal institutions according to Julian Steward (1955) included "government, legal systems, political parties, labor unions, schools, international trade, banking, and mass media.... These institutions permeated the socio-culture segments to such an extent that they cannot be functionally separated from them" (pp. 43-69). This led in turn to increased funding primarily through the government bureaucracy to the tune of 80.0 million dollars by 1974, and thus in a real sense:

> All the changes in Micronesia grew from money. Money built the shools and hired the teachers and laid the roads and changed the transport and offered wages and drew people into the district centers and gave them a new sense of their own worth and of the possibilities of the world ... so startling is the sense of money-change itself that it is worth examining the Trust Territory budgets over the years in tabular form. (Nevin, p. 136)

1961 - 7.4 million
1962 - 7.9 million
1963 - 16.7 million
1964 - 27.1 million
1965 - 23.5 million
1966 - 23.7 million
1967 - 25.9 million
1968 - 35.3 million
1969 - 41.2 million
1970 - 52.9 million

1971 - 62.9 million
1972 - 73.6 million
1973 - 79.6 million
1974 - 80.0 million

Note. Niven's source is probably Trust Territory documents.

This created the present day intensely bureaucratic nature of the Trust Territory especially in the district centers. Thus, these centers became the burgeoning centers for urbanity and the new rational relationships of Gesellshaft. Niven (1972) states,

> The intensely bureaucratic nature of the Trust Territory exacerbated by the great distances between districts (making each like a separate country), made many more clerks necessary. Typing, book-keeping, and drawing up reports and statements became important new occupations, and the employment rolls ... grew and grew. (p. 137)

Nor did this growth necessarily include large influxes of Americans. "Americans ... made up only ten percent of the total, and now make up considerably less" (Niven, p. 137). Perhaps this sense of growth in employment can best be seen in tabular form as Niven points out.

1962 - 2,686
1963 - 4,017
1964 - 4,437
1965 - 5,083
1966 - 5,078
1967 - 5,235

1968 - 5,360
1969 - 5,630
1970 - 7,835
1971 - 8,770
1972 - 9,022
1973 - 7,736
1974 - 6,815

Note. Again Niven's probable source is Trust Territory documents.

This, as a result, has led to many of the problems with respect to education that exist in Micronesia today. For as the formal structures of government and to a much smaller degree business grew in the district centers, this caused a rise in expectation among the populace and an increasing social demand for education so characteristic of underdeveloped Third World countries. For example, Coombs (1968) states that there are three main reasons why this social demand has intensified within the Third World since World War II.

> The first is the mounting educational aspirations of parents and their children. The second is the new stress of public policy almost everywhere on educational developments as a precondition for overall national development, and the parallel stress on the democratic imperative of increased educational participation rates--which means sending a higher proportion of each age group to school, and for more years. The third reason is the population explosion. (p. 18)

With respect to Micronesia, they have one of the

highest populations growths in the world today. "It is estimated to be gaining 3.5 to 5% a year and probably has doubled since 1960" (Nevin, p. 31). And according to Heine (1974),

> The revolution of rising expectation has already swept Micronesia. People are demanding better things and better services than they have ever demanded or enjoyed before. The gap between expectations and the reality of scarce resources, poverty, and a growing population is one dilemma facing any future government of Micronesia. (p. 73)

This has increased the demand for education and as a consequence created something of an educational explosion throughout the Trust Territory. Micronesians are going to school and off to colleges and universities on Guam and throughout the United States like they have never gone before. For example, Francis X. Herzel, S. J. (1978) notes with respect to Truk that:

> Nowhere has the explosion been felt more strongly than in the Truk District where school expansion in recent years has been enormous. In 1965 there was a single moderate sized high school serving the entire district; today there are no fewer than six. In that year there was a total of 200 Trukese with high school diplomas, today there are more than 2,300. A single senior class at Truk High School today produces more Trukese high school graduates than were turned out during the entire first twenty years of American administration in the Trust Territory.... In 1965, there were thirty-five Trukese away at college; today there are over 600 studying abroad.... Truk

> is literally awash with the young graduates that its schools have been mass-producing for some years now. (p. 167)

Nor is this education explosion relegated to the Trust Territory. In America's other Pacific Territory, Samoa, the same extension of American policy seems to be producing the same result with respect to meeting the social demands of the islanders; thus, acculturating the Samoans more tightly into the direction of the American Gesellshaft. Richard B. Baldauf (1978) says that

> Western education was, in cultural terms, a radical element within Samoan society. It's initial development had little influence in changing Samoan culture. But a complete restructuring, rebuilding, and partial re-staffing of a cooperation education effort from 1964-72 had a major impact on the community at large. By the early 1970's many of the basic tenets of traditional Samoan culture were being seriously challenged. In this situation, education seems to be an acculturation agent rather than one of cultural stability. (pp. 1-16)

In terms of curriculum, the response of the American system of schooling has been to increase the funding for bicultural and bilingual education in response to the Micronesian pluralistic situation. Several studies (Smith, 1976; Topping, 1975; Trifonovitch, 1975) have recommended that such a response would help Micronesians to gain a more well rounded attitude toward their own culture.

However, even with the bilingual and bicultural programs it is difficult to see how Micronesian traditional cultural institutions can compete when the impetus toward advancement, to power, and to a more modern way of life is so strongly attached to American institutions. It is with justification, therefore, that the American Gessellshaft has in a sense followed quickly behind the governmental foot paths that in the Pacific are leading the Micronesians closer toward assimilation and acculturation to the American way of life. In this sense Park and Burgess (1971) may have been more prophetic than they knew when they linked the four social processes toward assimilation as being "competition, conflict, accomodation, and then assimilation" (p.511).

Thus, the Micronesians can be seen to be in the "throes" of cultural and structural assimilation. As Ralph Linton (1944) notes, acculturation when it occurs is usually a trade off between two cultures and usually presents as a chief characteristic "alternative choices by one group to another. New techniques, new patterns of living, and new forms of political and economic behavior are exchanged." (p.9) But whereas immigrants to the United States were usually denied or were discriminated against with respect to those structures, (Gordon, 1964) in Micronesia it would appear that integrating Micronesians into American social, political, and economic structures is the policy of the U.S. Perhaps the only reason that amalgamation

has not taken place more firmly is that more Americans have not been involved. In this respect, the group who is perhaps the most romantically susceptible may be the new upcoming educated elite, burgeoning American colleges and universities. This leads up to the final question of where Micronesia is today.

Politically, the Northern Marianas have opted to break away and form "a closer relationship with the United States in the form of a Commonwealth status" (McHenry, p. 30). This gives them all the rights and privileges of United States citizens. The rest of Micronesia has moved toward forming a different political arrangement with the United States called "Free Association." Under this arrangement they (the Micronesians) would handle all of their own domestic affairs, and the United States would handle foreign affairs, while the political, social, and economic institutions would continue to be funded by the United States.

> The United States would exclude military penetration by other nations and could negotiate for more military bases and would continue to put some $80 million a year, with adjustments for inflation, into the Micronesian economy. (Niven, p. 145)

What about the education explosion which was

threatening to cause an unemployment explosion? The answer has come in the form of United States government funds and programs as administered by the Trust Territory governments in the district center.

Herzel (1978) states with respect to Truk that:

> The economic miracle that gave rise to so many additional jobs and made possible employment of great numbers of young graduates (and others as well) resulted from funds provided by U.S. Federal programs. C.E.T.A. alone employed 1500 persons in the last three years, although not all were on year-round jobs. A raft of other Federal programs, especially in education, health, and other social services, accounted for the employment of many others. Just as it was Federal programs that built the schools in the first place, and another Federal program that enabled so many of their graduates to attend college, so it was still others that provided employment for those finishing studies. (p. 184)

This in turn has allowed the government to absorb both the high school graduate, the students who have returned and have not completed their degrees, and those that were able to graduate from college.

So finally, these programs along with an increasing private economy fueled by the American dollar (Herzel, p. 183) seem to be moving the Micronesians down the road toward greater assimilation through the American political and bureaucratic process.

The Micronesians are following these footprints in the sand toward their future. Thus, McHenry's words (1975) may well prove to be the most prophetic after all in the halls of history. "But what has actually motivated the United States in Micronesia has been the assumption that Micronesia was ours and would always be ours--though its status might suffer nominal change" (p. 12).

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